


# COUNTY OF YORK

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** January 24, 2006 (BOS Mtg. 2/7/06)

**TO:** York County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** James O. McReynolds, County Administrator 

**SUBJECT:** Peninsula Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan

The federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires localities to adopt a hazard mitigation plan in order to continue to receive pre- and post-disaster hazard mitigation funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In order to address this mandate, York County has been working with James City County and the cities of Hampton, Newport News, and Williamsburg to develop a regional hazard mitigation plan. (The City of Poquoson is not participating in this project because in the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel, the Poquoson City Council opted to move ahead with a mitigation plan of its own and hired a consultant to prepare a mitigation plan for the city rather than wait for the regional effort to be completed.) The five participating localities secured a federal grant that allowed a consultant (AMEC Earth & Environmental) to be retained to facilitate the development of a multi-jurisdictional plan and formed a Peninsula Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (PHMPC) to manage the process. Conducting the process as a regional effort enhanced the ability to secure the planning grant. Funding for the County's share (\$1,765) of the required local match was available from the Department of Fire and Life Safety budget. York County's representation on this committee includes representatives from the Department of Fire and Life Safety, Planning Division, Department of Environmental and Development Services, Real Estate Assessment Office, Computer Support Services Division, and Building Regulation Division.

The result of this effort is the proposed Peninsula Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan. It includes a Hazard Identification and Risk Analysis for the region as well as community-specific profiles for each of the five participating localities. The plan also includes a series of hazard mitigation goals and objectives that were identified by the PHMPC with guidance from the consultant, as well as specific mitigation recommendations (i.e., action items) for achieving these goals and objectives. While the plan goals and objectives apply to the entire region, the mitigation recommendations for each locality were developed and prioritized by that locality's committee. As such, the plan is both a mitigation plan for the region as a whole and a local mitigation plan for each participating locality.

Federal regulations require that the process of preparing local and multi-jurisdictional mitigation plans be an open public involvement process that provides opportunities for the public to comment on the plan during the drafting stage and prior to plan approval. Throughout the development of the plan, a total of nine (9) public meetings were conducted in the participating localities to give citizens an opportunity to learn about the project and provide their input. In York County, public meetings were held on February 17, 2005 at York Hall and on November 2, 2005 at the Tabb Library. In addition, the consultant briefed the Comprehensive Plan Review Steering Committee on the project at

a public meeting on March 28, 2005. The fact that the Comprehensive Plan update and Hazard Mitigation Plan development processes were occurring concurrently was fortuitous in that the Steering Committee and its public outreach efforts satisfied some of the public participation requirements mandated by FEMA. To complete the public participation process, each of the five governing bodies is required to hold a public hearing prior to adopting the plan.

In accordance with federal regulations, the draft plan has been reviewed by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), whose comments were relatively minor and have been incorporated into the revised draft, which is now under review by FEMA. Following FEMA's review and pre-approval, which is expected to take 45 days, the plan must then be adopted by each of the respective governing bodies, after which the plan will be forwarded again to VDEM and FEMA for final approval. Depending on the extent of FEMA's comments, staff is tentatively targeting the public hearing and Board adoption for the April 18 meeting. To reiterate, the benefit of this process is that, upon adoption, the plan will ensure the County's eligibility to apply for pre- and post-disaster hazard mitigation funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Decisions on pursuing and implementing any or all of the proposed mitigation strategies for York County (many of which would involve only staff time) would be subject to further discussion and consideration by the Board.

The consultant will be present at the February 7 meeting to brief the Board on the plan and answer questions.

Carter/3337:TCC